

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 1 to 7, 12, 13, 16 to 20, 24, 28 and 32 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 8 to 11, 14, 15, 21 to 23, 25 to 27 and 29 to 31, and add new Claims 33 to 40, as follows.

Claims 1 to 7 (Cancelled).

8. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus, comprising:

a vibration element including a first elastic member, a second elastic member, a third elastic member and an electro-mechanical energy conversion element, said third elastic member and said electro-mechanical energy conversion element being that are disposed between said first ~~a first~~ elastic member and said second ~~a second~~ elastic member; and

a rotor that is brought into contact with a frictional surface of said ~~the~~ third elastic member,

wherein when a driving signal is applied to said ~~the~~ electro-mechanical energy conversion element, said ~~the~~ vibration element excites a first traveling wave at the frictional surface by generating ~~by a~~ bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to an axial direction of said ~~the~~ vibration element and a second traveling wave at the frictional surface by generating ~~an out-of-plane~~ bending vibrations of said ~~the~~ third elastic member, and a circular or an elliptical movement ~~movements~~ is produced at the frictional surface by a vibration wave as a composite of the first traveling wave and the second traveling wave.

9. (Currently Amended) A vibration element according to claim 8, wherein the driving signal applied to said ~~the~~ electro-mechanical energy conversion element is used for exciting the bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to the axial direction of said ~~the~~ vibration element.

10. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus, comprising:

a vibration element including a first elastic member, a second elastic member, a third elastic member and an electro-mechanical energy conversion element, said ~~and a third elastic member and said electro-mechanical energy conversion element being~~ that are disposed between ~~a first~~ said first elastic member and ~~a second~~ said second elastic member, and said ~~the~~ third elastic member having a frictional surface and an ~~a larger~~ outer diameter larger than that of said ~~the~~ electro-mechanical energy conversion element; and

a rotor that is brought into contact with the frictional surface of said ~~the~~ vibration element,

wherein said ~~the~~ vibration element excites bending ~~a bending~~ vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to an axial direction of said ~~the~~ first elastic member and said ~~the~~ second elastic member through application of a driving signal to said ~~the~~ electro-mechanical energy conversion element, and

a center of an anti-node of the bending vibration does not coincide with a center portion of said ~~the~~ third elastic member in an axial direction of said ~~the~~ vibration element.

11. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus, comprising:

a vibration element including a first elastic member, a second elastic member, a third elastic member and an electro-mechanical energy conversion element, said
~~and a third elastic member that are~~ and said electro-mechanical energy conversion element
being disposed between a first said first elastic member and a second said second elastic
member; and

a rotor that is brought into contact with a frictional surface of said third
elastic member ~~the vibration element~~,

wherein said ~~the~~ vibration element excites a ~~an out-of-plane~~ bending vibration in a plane orthogonal to an axial direction of said ~~the~~ vibration element in said ~~the~~ third elastic member by generating ~~by a~~ bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to the axial direction.

Claims 12 and 13 (Cancelled).

14. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 8, wherein a center portion in the axial direction of said ~~the~~ third elastic member does not coincide with a center of an anti-node of the bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to the axial direction of said ~~the~~ vibration element.

15. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 11, wherein a center portion in the axial direction of said ~~the~~ third elastic member does not coincide with a center of an anti-node of the bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to the axial direction of said ~~the~~ vibration element.

Claims 16 to 20 (Cancelled).

21. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 8, wherein at least one ~~of end~~ portion ~~portions~~ of said ~~the~~ vibration element has an increased diameter.

22. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 10, wherein at least one ~~of end~~ portion ~~portions~~ of said ~~the~~ vibration element has an increased diameter.

23. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 11, wherein at least one ~~of end~~ portion ~~portions~~ of said ~~the~~ vibration element has an increased diameter.

Claim 24 (Cancelled).

25. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said ~~the~~ third elastic member includes a thinner portion than a portion at which the frictional surface is located, on an inner peripheral side with respect to the frictional surface.

26. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said ~~the~~ third elastic member includes a thinner portion than a portion at which the frictional surface is located, on an inner peripheral side with respect to the frictional surface.

27. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said ~~the~~ third elastic member includes a thinner portion than a portion at which the frictional surface is located, on an inner peripheral side with respect to the frictional surface.

Claim 28 (Cancelled).

29. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said ~~the~~ vibration element further includes another electro-mechanical energy conversion element that is fixed to said ~~the~~ third elastic member.

30. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said ~~the~~ vibration element further includes another electro-mechanical energy conversion element that is fixed to said ~~the~~ third elastic member.

31. (Currently Amended) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said ~~the~~ vibration element further includes another electro-mechanical energy conversion element that is fixed to said ~~the~~ third elastic member.

Claim 32 (Cancelled).

33. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus, comprising:
a vibration element including a first elastic member, a second elastic member and an electro-mechanical energy conversion element which is disposed between said first elastic member and said second elastic member; and

a rotor that is brought into contact with a frictional surface of said first elastic member,

wherein said first elastic member has a first portion provided with said frictional surface, and a second portion having a diameter which is smaller than that of the first portion and which is located within said rotor, and

when a driving signal is applied to the electro-mechanical energy conversion element, said vibration element excites a first traveling wave at the frictional surface by generating bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to an axial direction of said vibration element and a second traveling wave at the frictional surface by generating bending vibrations in said third elastic member, and a circular or an elliptical movement is produced at the frictional surface by a vibration wave as a composite of the first traveling wave and the second traveling wave.

34. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to Claim 33, wherein a center portion in the axial direction of said first portion does not coincide with a center of an anti-node of the bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to the axial direction of said vibration element.

35. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to Claim 33, wherein said first portion of said first elastic member includes a thinner portion than a portion at which the frictional surface is located, on an inner peripheral side with respect to the frictional surface.

36. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus, comprising:
a vibration element including a first elastic member, a second elastic member and an electro-mechanical energy conversion element which is disposed between said first elastic member and said second elastic member; and
a rotor that is brought into contact with the frictional surface of said first elastic member,
wherein said first elastic member has a first portion provided with said frictional surface, and a second portion having a diameter which is smaller than that of said first portion and which is located within said rotor,
the vibration element excites bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to an axial direction of said vibration element through application of a driving signal to said electro-mechanical energy conversion element, and
a center of an anti-node of the bending vibration does not coincide with a center portion of said first portion in an axial direction of said vibration element.

37. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to Claim 36, wherein said first portion of said first elastic member includes a thinner portion than a portion at which the frictional surface is located, on an inner peripheral side with respect to the frictional surface.

38. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus, comprising:
a vibration element including a first elastic member, a second elastic member and an electro-mechanical energy conversion element which is disposed between said first elastic member and said second elastic member; and
a rotor that is brought into contact with a frictional surface of said first elastic member;

wherein said first elastic member has a first portion provided with said frictional surface, and a second portion having a diameter which is smaller than that of the first portion and which is located within said rotor, and

the vibration element excites a bending vibration in a plane orthogonal to an axial direction of said vibration element in said third elastic member by generating bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to the axial direction.

39. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to Claim 38, wherein a center portion in the axial direction of said first portion does not coincide with a center of an anti-node of the bending vibrations which are displaced in a direction orthogonal to the axial direction of said vibration element.

40. (New) A vibration wave driving apparatus according to Claim 38, wherein said first portion of said first elastic member includes a thinner portion than a portion at which the frictional surface is located, on an inner peripheral side with respect to the frictional surface.